The Story of a Righteous Deed

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Youth Forum

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In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

On a severe, cold winter night; rain falling heavily, a family sits encircling a heater and enjoying its warmth. The head of the family (the father) gets a suitable opportunity to talk to his two children: Ahmad, who is sixteen years old, and Leila who is fourteen, while mum is busy with her hand knitting.

Father says: Night, in the winter is long; so it is a blessing. What are your views on using this opportunity in order to tell you something that will be beneficial to you; both in this world and in the hereafter?"

Ahmad and Leila, with all happiness, smile, showing their readiness to learn more from their father and fill the time, as he used to narrate such stories to them, which has had a great effect on their lives.

Ahmad, while smiling, said: "Oh father, we want to hear stories that will warm us and give us more power, because tonight is very cold."

Leila said: "All my father's stories are stimulating."

Their mother laughed and said: "All girls are admirers of their fathers."

Father smiled and said: "And, so, their mothers."

Then, he said: "Let us start…I have decided to talk to you about an action that, if practiced by someone, he will enter paradise."

Ahmad said: "Is it a prayer?"

Father: "It is prayer; it is more than that."

Leila: "Is it fasting?"

Father: "It is fasting, and it is more than that."

Mother: "Is it working for the sake of Allah?"

Father: "It is all of these."

Leila said: "You have encouraged us…then, tell us what you want to say, Oh father."

Father: "I will talk to you about righteous deeds, but before defining them to you, let me put forward some questions as an introduction before entering the main topic."

"If you see an old man carrying a load…and he needs your help in order to reduce his burden…then what do you call this kind of service, Oh Ahmad?"

Ahmad: "I say this is a good work in the field of human assistance."

Father: "Oh! Leila, if one of your friends seeks your help in solving some of her ambiguous scientific problems in school, what do you call this kind of help?"

Leila: "I call it a good and fruitful cooperation."

Father: "If your friend comes to you while facing a particular problem, but you are unable to help him in solving his problem, although you share with him the burden of the problem with all sympathy and sentimental cooperation, then, what do you call this action of yours, Oh Ahmad?"

Ahmad: "As you say, a sentimental cooperation."

Leila: "But a sentimental cooperation is little. It is not like helping him in solving the problem."

Father: "All these are essential comments in the definition of a righteous deeds. Maybe we think that it is a huge and great work. For example, building a shelter for orphans is a good deed in people's sight, because it houses those children who are deprived of maternal and paternal care. The Holy Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.), recommended that the Muslims should take special care of them: *"I am together with the supporter of the orphans like these two – he joined his forefinger and the middle one together – in Paradise."* This is the call of Almighty Allah: ***"Therefore, as for the orphan, do not chide (him)".*** *Holy Qur'an: 93:9*

Some people may regard helping a blind man cross the street as an act of a good deed, while others consider it a small action.

Ahmad: "Oh father, from your speech, I understand that an action can never be weight by its quantity?"

Father: "This is exactly what I wanted to draw attention to. All the examples and questions I have forwarded to you, about whether the actions are small or big, are good deeds, but on condition."

Leila: "If this is so, then why on condition?"

Father: "It is sound and good work, but in order to be good, from the Islamic point of view, it must be done for Allah's sake. In another words, Islam doesn't see the shape of one's action or its type of quantity, rather it looks for the factor that stimulates someone to do the work. Is it done for someone's personal interest? Or is it done for getting fame among people? Or is it done purely for Allah's sake and seeking His pleasure?"

Leila: "Suppose that I help one of my friends in order that it be said that I am a good person...can this harm my good action or is it still a good work?"

Father: "...you have taken us to the peak of the topic! The scale with which Islam weights people's actions is the motive and reason that

stimulates man to do the action, or, as it is called "intention". Thus, the more pure and sound the intention, the more pure and sound the action will be. But, when the intention is not sound or is combined with something else that can remove it from its sound meaning, then, such an action can never be regarded as a sound and pure action, even if it attracts people's sight and mind."

Ahmad: "These valuable and great deeds, made by people's hands and minds, cannot be regarded righteous and good just because they don't seek Allah's consent? Are not such fruitful actions a benefit to mankind?"

Father: "In Islam, they are called good and beneficial actions, but they are not considered righteous ones, unless they are done for the sake of seeking Allah's pleasure and the closeness to Him, which will make the actions purely for His sake."

Leila: "How can they be good and beneficial, but not righteous?"

Father; "Your nice and important question takes us to coming know the features of a righteous deed. Sometimes we look at an action based on its nature, its type and its effect on human life, thus, we ought to regard building a hospital, a school, an orphan's shelter and a

factory as beneficial actions, and compare them with their quantities and outcomes."

"Another time, we look at an action based on its adherence to man and its coming from his faithful personality, i.e., the action portrays the form of a man in his thinking, feelings, behavior, his spiritual and human methods in doing a particular action."

In the first instance, the comparison can be as follows: "Building a hospital is greater than building a personal house; giving alms of one thousand Dinar is greater than giving one hundred Dinar; giving medicine to one who is sick is better than making him happy, and reducing his pain, psychologically, if you cannot cure him from his sickness."

"In the second instance, building a house or giving alms of one hundred Dinar or comforting a sick one may be a great action equal to the action that comes from a big personality. Thus, a small action, here, expresses a greater personality; while a big action – in the first instance – expresses a small personality, which has nothing – in its action – rather than personal interest and narrow spirit."

"Briefly, Islam's views concerning an action is that the value of each action goes back to its contents, not to its shapes. If the motive and reason is personal, or for business purposes, or

social blind imitation and the rest, then its possessor doesn't have any reward from Allah, because it is not for Allah's sake."

"Therefore, we can draft the Islamic view on a righteous action with the following words: "Islam gives importance to the motives (of an action) not to its benefits (interests)."

Leila: "From these, can we say that Islam annuls the benefits derived from an action, completely?"

Father: "Never, rather it gives much importance to motives and intentions before everything else. If the motives and intentions are pure and good, then the action that comes from it will be good and pure. And also, naturally, if the motives are sound and the action is great, then the benefit will be great also. Therefore, Islam encourages the doing of good and beneficial actions: *"The best of men is he who benefits people."* This should be done within the condition we mentioned, i.e., action for the sake of Allah and seeking His pleasure."

"We ought to know that sound motives and the intention meant for seeking Allah's pleasure, helps in the continuity of a certain good action, i.e., it is a guarantee for the continuation and increment of a good action. But other motives – personal-perish and change according to the

condition of the interest, and there is no surety that it will turn into a good action."

"Therefore, the main condition of a virtuous action is that it must be done for the sake of Allah and seeking His satisfaction. Thus, we can enlist every action, even if it is 'an atoms weight', in the list of virtuous acts if its condition is provided. I can explain this to you through the following narration of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.):

"On the Day of Resurrection, a man will be brought forth, Almighty Allah will say: 'Take him to hell fire', and he will say: 'Why Oh Lord, I have spent my wealth for Your sake?' Then it will be said: 'You are telling a lie. You spent it in order that it be said that you are generous'. And another one will be brought forth, and Almighty Allah will say: "Take him to hell fire", and he will say: 'Why, Oh Lord, I have fought for Your sake?' It will be said: 'You are telling a lie, you fought in order that it be said that you are brave'. Yet another one will be brought; Almighty Allah will say: 'Take him to hell fire', and he will say: 'Why, Oh Lord, I have spent my life seeking knowledge?' It will be said: 'You are telling a lie. You seek knowledge in order that shoes will surround you (that people may surround you and praise you).'"

"Thus, based on these actions we can compare the other actions, in order to know the

virtuous ones from the bad ones, or the actions meant for Allah's satisfaction and those that are not. I would remind you, once again, that the base (measure) is not the benefit, because it may be possible that some actions may be beneficial, but not virtuous in the sight of Islam."

Ahmad: "By this, do not we reduce the circle of virtuous acts and confine them to the actions done by the true believers alone? Wonderful, what can we say concerning those actions that serve humanity?"

Father: "We have already differentiated between virtuous actions and non-virtuous actions in the Islamic view point. What remains are the actions and scientific services that have a clear benefit to the society. Do not you see that we benefit from all these in our scientific life? If it were not for the achievements and researches in the field of science and action, we would have been left behind."

"We evaluate all actions in accordance with their nature, quantity, type and effect on human life. Do not withhold from people the things that are their due. Some actions will be rewarded with prizes or certificates of appreciation or fame, because none has done something like it in the past."

"When we said that these actions are not virtuous acts, Islamically, this doesn't mean that

the action is not right. It is good for human service everywhere. It is not a bad action, but Islam wants it to come from a pure spirit to the service of man, without good turn (reminding someone that, 'I have done this for you'), i.e., its purpose is seeking Allah's consent not people's consent, and this is based on the basis of, ***"We feed you for the sake of Allah alone; no reward do we desire from you; nor thanks."*** *Holy Qur'an (76: 9)*

Leila: "From this, we can deduce that a virtuous act is the action that comes from honest faith, which is meant only for Allah, is it not?"

Father: "This is a brilliant conclusion that adds to my confidence in you, Oh Leila. But, let me finish tonight's discussion with a close example from our life incidence: 'If a rich man assigns someone to work in his company for his interest only, does the worker have the right to work for the rich man and another rich man again after the first rich man has made it a condition that he must do the work for himself alone, not others, and he pays him a huge amount of money that he cannot get from any other rich men?'"

Leila: "I used to hear you saying: "A true believer must abide by the conditions stated upon."

Ahmad: "And you are also saying: 'A contract is a law on both parties.'"

Father: "It is not permissible to play with the condition agreed upon by two parties. Thus, the contract between our Lord and us is like the contract that it is not permissible to break. He – as our Lord and Creator - has made it a condition on us that our actions must be done for His sake only."

"If we work both for Him and for others, this means we have broken the agreed upon conditions and the trust given to us: ***"We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but Man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish (ignorant)".*** *Holy Qur'an (33: 72),* unjust to himself, the trust and indeed to his Lord, and ignorant to the value of the trust and its great effect."

"God willing, we will continue the discussion on the forms of virtuous actions tomorrow."

What Are the Kinds of a Righteous Deed?

On the following night, after the family had finished their dinner, Leila asked her father to continue yesterday's discussion. She said: "After this delicious food prepared by my mother, we want to benefit from you father. We are eager to know the kinds of virtuous actions."

The father smiled saying: "Eagerness in knowledge helps in developing one's intelligence, illuminates the intellect, widens the heart and stimulates the joints to act."

Ahmad: "Knowledge – as you taught us – is the best thing that differentiates one from another".

Father: "May Allah bless you. Almighty Allah says: ***"Say: Are those who know and those who do not know equal? Only the men of understanding are mindful."*** *Holy Qur'an (39: 9)*

"Now, let us complete the journey with the stories of virtuous acts by defining their forms. How many forms does the virtuous act have?"

Ahmad: "Its forms are many; there is no specification for it."

Leila: "It is one in content but many in forms, based on the definition we learned yesterday."

The father smiles while turning to his wife to ask her: "Oh mother of Ahmad, what can you say?"

Mother: "I understood from the saying of Almighty Allah: ***"Those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness"*** that virtuous acts are not one, but many."

Father: "All that you have put forward is right and beneficial. Virtuous acts done for the sake of Allah, are one in their meaning, but have many faces and appearances that can be called virtuous acts, i.e., the acts, which have that condition."

Leila: "Let us think of bringing forth some examples of those acts."

Father: "This is good Leila, bring what you have."

Leila: "I think speaking good words is among virtuous acts, as it is said in a prophetic narration that: "*A good word is an alms.*"

Father: "You are right; good words are not just words spoken by the tongue, rather they are words meant for reform. This is the saying of Almighty Allah: ***"There is no good in most of their secret counsels except (in his) who enjoins charity or goodness or reconciliation between people..."*** *Holy Qur'an (4: 114)*

As it is also meant for upgrading others in their minds and experiences, as well as,

reducing their pains and telling them words of encouragement and strengthening their spirits.

But the best words are those presented for the purpose of guidance, truth, good and justice: ***"And who speaks better than he who calls to Allah while he himself does good, and says: I am surely of those who submit?"*** *Holy Qur'an (41: 33)*

"Here I want to draw your attention to the fact that a good word is not only confined to what we says while meeting face to face, rather it includes those words which we write in books, papers, use on television, radio or the internet.

As it is comprised, also, of education, which frees man from the darkness of ignorance leading to the light of knowledge, as well as, the words spoke in defending right, freedom and good things.

Based on these, Almighty Allah raises the value of good words: ***"To Him do ascend the good words; and the good deeds, lift them up,"*** *Holy Qur'an (35: 10).* Note the accurate and wise parallel between 'good words' and 'good deeds'. The good word ascends and the good deed lifts up, because both of the two are poured into the river of Allah's consent. No doubt the word spoken for the sake of Allah and the action done for the sake of Allah are the works done to the people and for their service. This means that the term (for Allah's sake) is paying service to the

creatures of Allah, they are human beings. Therefore, we will understand that a virtuous work is not ritual or signs of faith that a believer can get reward from Allah alone, rather it is a work that has its social returns."

Ahmad: "But I think among the most important forms of a virtuous action is to benefit people, as well as, remove any harm from them and seek Allah's pleasure."

Father: "This is another great topic, because any action done for the sake of guiding people, or increasing their standard of education, awareness, living, health, or helping them in defending themselves from the danger of an enemy, or any action that paves the way for them in production and anything that will help their development and growth, or building their social relation based on the teachings of Islam, is considered among the acts of virtue."

"Any action that protects them from evil and harm, anxiety and fear, makes the environment free from pollution and anything that endangered its well being, removing the obstacle that disturbs family life…are all virtuous acts."

Mother: "In my opinion enjoining good and forbidding evil is an act of virtue."

Father: "Rather they are among the greatest virtuous actions. Because as enjoining good and guiding people to the right path is an act of virtue, likewise, forbidding evil by its three known ways (the hand, tongue and heart)."

"Not fighting, lying and blocking the ways of liars, in order to be truthful and honest in their sayings and actions, as well as calling others to follow the path of truth, befriending honest people and increasing honest actions, are, no doubt, virtuous acts."

"As giving much time in preventing backbiting, speaking direct words, speaking about shortcomings in secret and cautioning others not to fall into its depth are all virtuous acts."

"Working for the purpose of freedom, fighting the oppressors and dictators in order to save people from their evil and crimes and, also, helping in building a free life full of greatness through institutions and foundations are among the best acts of virtue."

"Among the greatest acts of virtue is judging with what Almighty Allah revealed, this can never be achieved unless by exercising Allah's laws on earth. Through this, we can prepare a fertile land for sowing virtuous acts with all its types and forms. This is the saying of Almighty Allah: ***"Those who, should We establish them in the land, will keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate and enjoin good and forbid evil."*** *Holy Qur'an (22: 41)*

Ahmad: "I think reform is an act of virtue also."

Father: "Certainly, it is not right to consider all actions as evil or have a negative side that requires an essential reform. No doubt some actions require reform in order to return to their former state."

"Islam regards "reformation of relationship" between two quarreling parties among the greatest acts. It is said in one narration: "Reconciling two parties is better than the whole prayers and fasting," and this is the saying of Almighty Allah: ***"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood; so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers..."*** *Holy Qur'an (49: 10)*

"Reform can be practiced in any field facing cracks and splits and treating its spoiled part is the first step. This is an act of virtue."

"I will add another list of virtuous acts to what you have already mentioned: Removing harmful materials from the Muslims…is an act of virtue, stopping smoking in public places that can harm the people's health…is an act of virtue. Refraining from dropping dirty things on the way, which will pollute the environment, is an act of virtue also. This is because public places, roads and streets are public possession; therefore, it is not right for someone to treat it as personal belongings."

"Refraining from increasing the volume of the radio, television or loud speakers, even people's noise especially at the resting time is an act of virtue."

"Taking care of the beauty of surroundings and refraining from the cutting or burning of trees, flowers and grasses, as well as, stopping aggression in public resting parks…are all acts of virtue. Have you not seen, in some countries, that there is an organization called "Greenness Organization" that takes the responsibility of

protecting the environment against any aggression and pollution?"

"The case is the same with treating animals mildly without any aggression to them. There are some organizations meant for this purpose. Islam, also, calls on its followers to behave mildly with animals and refrain from hurting and treating them harshly. All these are acts of virtue."

"In general, the civilized human and the Islamic way of life is the one that was formed by virtuous acts, which a Muslim practices as an act of answering the call of his Lord for developing the land with anything good, beneficial, just and beautiful."

"Most of the works that are regarded today as an act of civilization and a source of growth and development are those that Islam had already called upon his followers toward them, but, unfortunately the Muslims disregard them. The more the rate of these acts increase in the Muslims societies, the more it regains its lost prestige in controlling the world affairs and the values which most societies are in need of. It is not haphazard for Islam to connect faith with a virtuous act, because they are joints that can never be separated: ***"Those who have faith and do righteous deeds, they are the best of creatures,"*** *Holy Qur'an (98:7)*

"By the grace of Allah, on the following night, we will discuss about the returns of a virtuous deed and its positive effect, so as to explain its importance."

What Are the Effects of a Righteous Deed?

It seems that this night Ahmad and Leila were wholly engaged with some homework, and their mother was about to finish some of her housework, and the father was busy reading some newspapers. The heater is blowing as if it wants to finish the cold weather.

After a while…the unity of the family takes a new shape…it is Leila who approaches her father with her smile, her father acknowledges her presence with a reply to her smiling, and calls her to sit near him.

Not long after Ahmad also approaches while thanking Allah for giving him the might to finishes his assignment; he is prepared to listen to his father.

When all the three were seated in a state of love and respect, the mother came in carrying some winter fruits, in order to make the meeting more refreshing.

The father drops the newspaper from his hand to one side and starts talking.

Father: "This night our discussion – as I promised yesterday – will be on the rewards of a righteous deed and its positive effects both on the believers who practice the deeds and the society in general. As usual, let us start by

warming the meeting…Leila, tell me, when you are doing any virtuous deeds, or you, Ahmad, whenever you are doing any virtuous acts, what are your feelings while doing them?"

Leila: "I have a feeling and a sense of great happiness".

Ahmad: "I have peace of mind."

The father turns to the mother of Ahmad to ask her: "And you, mother of Ahmad and Leila?"

Mother: "Whenever I am doing any virtuous deed, especially serving this sound family, I feel that I am the one who is supposed to do such an act, i.e., it adds to me something that I did have before, and whenever I continue doing the work, my perfection increases."

Father (starting to shed more light): "I can say that you have tasted the sweetness of virtuous deeds. These feelings are the real feelings of everyone practicing these acts, i.e., a spiritual happiness fills his being. He will feel the coolness of peace of mind which spreads to every corner of his being, as well as, getting a state of tranquility that he cannot find in any act other than the act loved by Allah and full of His consent. This, apart from the feeling that he is a man of value and aim in life, and that the more he comes closer to his aim, the more developed he will be and enjoy the service of the people."

"Are we not ought to enjoy these sincere feelings so as to make our daily programs a source of giving service to the society?"

Ahmad: "As long as Almighty Allah made man his vicegerent on the earth, then, the responsibility of building and protecting it will be a great and valuable responsibility, and I don't think the earth will be reformed and developed without virtuous acts."

Leila: "Without this, life can never be sweet, nor can happiness be achieved."

Mother: "As it will not be valuable enough to deserve patience and sacrifice."

Father: "Through these feelings, now we can see the effects of a virtuous deed from the side of its doer and on the society on the other side:

1- The feeling of spiritual growth and development. The difference between the one who practices a virtuous deed and the one who does not practice is great, for a true believer regards his spirit as high and great, thus, he must do something great to achieve his aim of being a servant of Allah. Great works come from great personalities, not only by its quantity but also by its content.

But he who practices non-virtuous acts, may get a little and temporary enjoyment which disappears soon, because it comes only from his narrow being and interests, nor lives in a high

spirit possessed by the doer of a virtuous deed. The secret of a virtuous deed is that it is connected to the Almighty Allah; thus, it is the widest circle, the everlasting and deeply rooted more than any other action: ***"O thou man! Verily thou art ever toiling on towards thy Lord painfully toiling, but thou shall meet Him,"*** *Holy Qur'an (84:6)*

From this, can we understand why Allah promised those who believe and do righteous deeds that He will endow them with power on earth? It is because they are more capable of leading people towards the coast of security, goodness, success, truth and justice."

2- Righteous deeds – with their good stimulus – spread mercy, love, help, respect and sacrifice, as well as, advice and recommendation. It is just like a part of a building, which unites hand in hand, and makes a high building, extends good to everywhere, and brings security to the whole society. It is a society full of beauty…the society of glory and high respects…a developed society that produces not a backward and retarded society.

3- A righteous deed naturally is a motivated power towards that stimulates the good side of the self…thus, it paves the way for the members of a society to compete between themselves on righteous deeds. The opposite is the case of a dead and retarded society, where its members

live in a state of laziness and wait for others to help them. These factors leads them to dullness, decay and ungratefulness, that those who practice righteous acts can be compared with bees cells, in a productive and sacrificial state, that cannot waste time or narrow chances.

4- Through righteous deeds we can compete with other developed societies and even to pass them in various fields of science and knowledge. The more the motivated power of actions – righteous deeds – is on, it will no doubt lead us to a high status, because having a relationship with Allah is the cause of all development.

Islam requires us – most especially the youth – to make all our lives a field of worship, not only in the mosques, rather it wants the mosques to be a starting point towards the arena of righteous deeds in the political, economical, scientific and social fields. This will help us to move forward.

5- Those who experience righteous deeds, taste its sweet and continue to practice it is one of the great sources of faith in Allah, confidence in Him, trust in His protection and obeying His commands and consent. This will put spiritual trust, peace of mind and tranquility in the heart of the doer of righteous deeds, which can never be found in any deed other than this.

Righteous deeds may be compared with medication in its first form for treating most of the spiritual anxiety facing the youth today. Experiences have confirmed that those people who practice righteous acts live longer lives than those who work for themselves and their own material desires. Because the state of spiritual happiness through obeying Allah and working for His sake sweeps away all the state of anxiety and fear that block and stand still on the way of those who don't have faith in Allah, nor practice righteous deeds.

6- A righteous deed is a blessed act that contains good and blessing in its fold to everyone that holds it and its effect. Because Almighty Allah opens the doors of His mercy widely on those who practice righteous acts, guide them towards His paths, eases them from many hardships and pains, as well as, directs them to the best and appropriate firmness on earth.

Those who practice acts of righteousness are not only blessed, strong, and respected in their society, but also, are successful in the Hereafter.

Allow me to bring forward some returns gained by those good people in the hereafter, the day of loss and gain, the day of resurrection and the day of regret, from those who are not successful in the worldly life and forget that it is

a farm for the hereafter. Thus, they wasted the day of sowing and got nothing on the day of harvesting.

Wages gained at the end of righteous deeds are much and in different ways and kinds: - (Security in the day of great anxiety): ***"Whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good – they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve."*** *Holy Qur'an (5:69)*

- (Entering Paradise): ***"Except those that repent and believe and do good, those shall enter the garden."*** *Holy Qur'an (19:60)*

- (Good and double reward): ***"And as for him who believes and does good, he shall have goodly reward,"*** *Holy Qur'an (18:88)*. ***"But whoever believes and does good, these it is for whom is a double reward for what they do,"*** *Holy Qur'an (34:37)*

- (Changing evil deeds to good ones): ***"Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones,"*** *Holy Qur'an (25:70)*

- (Reaching high rank, it is the degree that we can regard it as over all degrees, but its limits and quantity are in the hand of Allah Who is the giver of all things): ***"And whoever come to Him a believer (and) he has done good deeds indeed, these it is who shall have the high ranks,"*** *Holy Qur'an (20:75)*

- (Heavenly Love): ***"Surely (as for) those who believe and do good deeds for them will Allah bring about love,"*** *Holy Qur'an (19:96)*

Just imagine the love of Allah to His servants who do good deeds, a love from Him (Allah) toward him (the doer of good), which makes him feel the sweetness of Allah's satisfaction and closeness toward Him. A love will not only be from the Angels, who surround him, but also, from the people of Paradise who will be his neighbors.

Mother: "From the verses you read for us, I understand that there is a sincere and strong relationship between 'faith' and 'good deeds', as if they are friends that can never be apart."

Father: "An important observation from the mother of Ahmad...if we look at faith, theoretically, in Muslim ideology, then 'good deeds' are its practical side. Islam calls for both of them. I can never be a believer without practicing good deeds, if not, then, my faith will be like a board placed on the wall, but without giving pulse to life, or like a manufactured flower, which gives no sweet scent."

But, when faith turns into movement and action, then it will turn everything into a physical action. That is why it was reported in the Prophetic narration: *"Faith is all action."* This is because when faith becomes firm in the heart, it will be like a director general who directs his workers towards doing good deeds, in order to

turn from the theoretical rank to a practical one."

"You can read about history and the faith of believers in order to see how faith was able to do miracles in the world. Have you not seen the rain that is falling now, how it makes good tiding to the earth in order to be stirred to life, swells and puts forth every kind of beautiful growth? Likewise faith, if it fills a sincere heart, will burst with all kinds of good and beauty."

"Good, piety, developing the earth, invention, struggle, victory, are some of the fruits of this blessed plant (faith)."

Leila: (joking) "It seems my mother is the star of this night."

Father: "She is the star of this night and all nights."

Mother: (smiling) "You have made me feel shy."

Father: "Before we round up tonight's discussion, I wanted, while discussing the effects of righteous deeds, to draw your attention to the role of the youth (male and female) in doing righteous deeds, are great and many."

"It is clear that, you are blessed with pure soul and good intention and you follow your good and pure nature, which has repulsed oppression and aggression and likes to see

justice prevail, as you are also blessed with power, strong will and the high ability for action. All these are clear and encourageable signs that you – the youth – can be the star of the field of good deeds."

"Do not you see – for instance – that due to your liking of social actions that you can establish charity groups, reform institutions or that of enjoining good and forbidding evil or other social and educational activities?"

"A youth is like a businessman who does everything to increase his profits, thus, do not leave the chance unless you utilize it in order to gain more profits and returns."

Ahmad: (raising his hand and face high) "Oh Allah give us the chance to do business with you."

Leila: "And this business can never fail."

The father and mother all together said: "Amen, oh Our Lord."

Wrong Conceptions:

Rain is falling heavily... some drops hit the windows of the house as if they are seeking permission to enter while running away from the fierce cold that is coming inside the house where it is full of heat from the flames of the heater.

The family is sitting down near the heater waiting to hear the encouraging speech of the father.

Father: "Tonight I will talk about some wrong concepts of some people on the meaning of good deeds. You may meet some people who have wrong concepts concerning this, so, I feel that we are in need of correcting such wrong concepts.

Some may think that since they come from a family of faith, this is enough for them to learn faith and act on it, as if they are living against a firm and secure wall, not knowing that there is no firm and secure wall for them than their actions. Relying on the parent's faith doesn't take off the responsibilities of faith from the child.

"Look at the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), and how he addresses his family and progenies concerning the necessity of building their faith

and working with it without paying attention to the proximity that exists between him and them. He once said: "Oh Abbas bin Abdul-Muttalib, Oh the uncle of the Messenger of Allah! Work and do not say I am the uncle of the Messenger of Allah.... Oh Safiyya bint (daughter of) Abdul-Muttalib, Oh the aunt of the Messenger of Allah! Work and do not say I am the aunt of the Messenger of Allah...Oh Fatima bint Muhammad! Work and do not say I am the daughter of the Messenger of Allah; this will not be enough for you in the sight of Allah. I swear by He whose hand Muhammad's life is in, if I do evil I will be dropped."

"Is there any statement more clear than this? A poet has said:

"He is not a youth who says: My father was so and so; rather a youth is the one who says: I am the one."

"Based on this, we see how the Holy Qur'an asks the wives of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), and they are the mothers of all believers, to show more efforts to make their faith more complete than other women. They should not rely on their marriage relationship with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) alone: ***"Oh Consorts of the Prophet ye are not like any of the (other) women; if ye do fear Allah,"*** *Holy Qur'an (33:32).* Based on this specification, they are requested to refrain from committing evil and to do good, a through request: ***"O Consorts of***

the Prophet if any of you were guilty of evident unseemly conduct, the punishment will be doubled to her, and that is easy for Allah. But any of you that is devout in the service of Allah and His Messenger, and work righteousness, to her shall We grant her reward twice: and have prepared for her a generous sustenance," *Holy Qur'an (33:30-31).* Thus, the relationship with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) is not enough for his wives to escape such a request."

"Some may think that evil deeds may not harm good faith, indeed, it is a strange concept toward Islam, and Islam is far away from such concept. Faiths are connected to each other; and can never be separated from each other. How can someone pretend that he loves Allah and His Messenger, Muhammad (s.a.w.) and his Holy Family, while he does not practice their traditions of obeying Allah in what He commands and what He forbids?"

"Initially, the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) thought that evils don't harm faith and likewise associating something with Allah doesn't harm actions until this verse came ***"...and not make vain your deeds"***, *Holy Qur'an (47:33).* The People of the Book – Jews and Christians – also, thought that they have a high place in the sight of Allah more than others, then the saying of Allah clearly and without any exception came: ***"Do not desire, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail); whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly nor will he find, besides***

Allah, any protector or helper. If any do deeds of righteousness, be they male or female and have faith, they will enter heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them," *Holy Qur'an (4:123-124)*

"Some may think that faith is just a word of mouth or saying of the two testimonies, they are separated between faith and what was required of good deeds and piety. Maybe they forgot the saying of Almighty Allah: ***"O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not do? Grievously odious is it in the sight of Allah that ye say that which ye do not do,"*** *Holy Qur'an (61:2-3),* as if he sees that he is exempted from what the commands of Allah be it from the Muslims and believers. Even though the cohesion between faith and good deeds is the cohesion between something and its shadow. There is no faith without action, there is no faith in the one who calls for an action without doing it himself, or he calls for it and does its opposite."

"Thus, he who carries the Holy Qur'an without working with it, and he who holds the Bible without working with it, is like the one who holds the Old Testament without working with it, they are all together: ***"Is like a donkey which carries huge tomes (but understands them not). Evil is the similitude of people who falsify the signs of Allah; and Allah guides not people who do wrong,"*** *Holy Qur'an (62: 5)*

"There is another wrong concept. Somebody may be a believer and do righteous deeds, but he is proud and depends solely on his action. He thinks that he doesn't need Allah's help and pity, i.e., he doesn't have any doubt on the

acceptance of his work. In other words, he thinks that he has the guarantee that he will enter Heaven as a result of his work only."

"This is arrogance and vanity; this is one of the things that spoils righteous deeds, as we will discuss it later. This is because it is required from a believer to do good deeds thinking whether he did it for Allah's sake or not? Does something evil or proud enter it or not? Can Allah accept it or not? Or He will not accept it? Or can he do it if he is not in such a state or not? And other questions, which will make him seek Allah's favor even if his deeds are righteous."

"Do not such people see that Abraham and Isma'il (a.s.), after they had finished building the house (Ka'ba) commanded by Allah, they did so with all faithfulness and obedience to His command? Did not they seek Allah's acceptance of the deeds even though there is no doubt it is a righteous deed: ***"And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundation of the house (with this prayers); 'Our Lord accept (this service) from us; for thou art the All-Hearing, the all knowing,"*** *Holy Qur'an (2:127)*

"Indeed, hopes alone are risks and likewise, fear alone is also a stumbling block to movement. There must be hope beside fear and fear also beside hope. None of them should be left behind or come forward and leave the other."

"On the following night, I will tell you the things that spoil righteous deeds, in order to be cautious about it, if we are alive and healthy tomorrow."

Things that Spoil a Righteous Deed?

Tonight is Friday night…there will be a holiday tomorrow. This is what made Leila approach her father saying:

"The whole time is yours, my father. Tomorrow is Friday, so we can benefit more from your discussion.

Father (smiling and joking): "Is this your view, alone, or is it the view of all?"

Ahmad (turning to his mother): "This is her view and ours too, am I not right mother?"

Mother: "This is a blessed night, and I do not see a better discussion than the one we are having now."

Father: "Indeed, it gives me power to talk about two things: Invalidators of righteous deeds and those things that purify them from those things that spoiled them."

"In the beginning, we have to accept that Almighty Allah doesn't accept any deed except those that are only meant for him. If one of us is not careful towards his action, he must, at least, purify it from bad things. It is like water that has some particles of impure things. If you leave it without purifying it, it may turn into brackish water.

"The following are the most common and important invalidators that spoil the water of our deeds:"

(Intention) is an invalidator of righteous deeds; this is because if you make your intention for Allah and for people. also, indeed, you spoil your work. The Holy Qur'an says: ***"O ye who believe! Cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury"***, *Holy Qur'an (2:264)*, Reminding someone of your generosity is mentioning what you did for someone, proudly, which may hurt him or harm his dignity in front of others. The Holy Qur'an refutes this act even to those who do it for accepting Islam ***"They impress on thee as a favor that they have embraced Islam. Count not your Islam as a favour upon me; nay Allah has conferred a favour upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if ye be true and sincere,"*** *Holy Qur'an (49:17)*. Or on what they give as a service to Islam: ***"He may say (boastfully): Wealth have I squandered in abundance!"*** *Holy Qur'an (90:6)*, i.e, to say that they increase their offer to Islam in order to be proud of it anytime, forgetting that it is Almighty Allah that bestowed a favour on them by guiding them to faith and what he gave them of wealth, and, likewise, He is the one that makes them do righteous deeds.

"The act of reminding someone of what you did for him – as you can see – has two major negative sides: Spoiling one's deed in the hereafter on one side and, on the other, the harm

that can be done to the person you remind of the favour. Thus, Almighty Allah wants righteous deeds to be free from physical and spiritual hurt, and it must be free from pride to Almighty Allah."

(Boasting) with righteous deeds is another invalidator; it is for instance telling others, when you did something, that I am more closer to Allah than you and I am among the people of piety and righteousness. It is an act of arrogance and being proud of ones action. It was related in a narration that *"If not for arrogance from believers, their deeds will have been accepted completely."*

(Multiplication) is another kind of reminding others of what has been done for someone. It calculates our deeds and multiplies it with others deeds in order to show that we work more and better than others in the field of comparison between what we gave and what we received. When you look at yourself, you will imagine that your position in the sight of Allah is the greatest, thus, your rights on Him are many; Almighty Allah says: ***"Nor expect, in giving, any increase (for thyself)!"*** *Holy Qur'an (74:6)*

(Associating Allah with someone) in deeds is another invalidator of deeds. Let me give you an example: When you tell a doctor that 'if not because of you, I would have died', you associate someone with Allah, because Allah is

the only healer of all sickness. ***"And when I am ill, it is He Who cures me"*** *Holy Qur'an (26:80)*

Thus, the right way, is to say (to a doctor), 'if not of Allah's blessing to you, I would have died'. It is Allah's favour on the sick that Allah blessed him with a doctor that understood his sickness and gave him a right and suitable medicine for its treatment. This is the saying of Almighty Allah, ***"And most of them believe not in Allah without associating (others as partners) with Him"*** *Holy Qur'an (12:106)."*

(Illusion) is another invalidator of deeds. It is the one which I thought and taught you before. It is for one of you to think that one has a special position in the sight of Allah, so based on this, Allah will forgive him and He will not hold him responsible for his action as He is doing it to others. Almighty Allah described some Jews and Christians by saying: ***"And they said: None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian"***, *Holy Qur'an (2:111)*. As some Jews who are deep in their dream and hopes; ***"They said: the fire shall not touch us but for a few numbered days"***, *Holy Qur'an (3:24)*

"Indeed, it is illusion and hopes that are untrue. An example of those having illusions is the son of Noah, who was called to enter the ship but he was arrogant, thus, he refused saying: ***"I will betake myself to some mountain; it will save me from the water,"*** *Holy Qur'an (11:43)*. He drowned and was among those killed. Thus, Almighty Allah described his work as an

unrighteous deed. Almighty Allah says: ***"He said: O Noah he is not of thy family; for his conduct is unrighteousness,"*** *Holy Qur'an (11:46)*

"And likewise, disbelieve, hypocrisy and blocking Allah's path through obeying other than Allah are all invalidators of deeds: ***"O ye who believe; Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and make not vain your deeds,"*** *Holy Qur'an; (47:33)*

"After this quick journey in the field of invalidators of deeds, now we will look into the method of purifying righteous deeds destroyed by evil."

Leila: "I think the greatest purifier of righteous deeds is making your deeds solely for Allah, based on our definition of a righteous deed."

Father: "Yes, this is the general framework, but how can we reach it?"

"It is clear, by the definition of a righteous deed, that it is a deed meant for Allah's sake, i.e., Allah's consent, and Allah's consent cannot be achieved unless by knowing Allah. If we know Allah well, then, we will be able to live for His sake and do things the way He likes, completely, as when we know the right of our parents or friends in order to respect their rights."

"Before, I gave an example. Let us have a look at some issues that are related to Almighty Allah:"

"It is He Who guides us towards a righteous deed, i.e., if not because of Him we will not have known what is a righteous deed and what is an unrighteous deed."

"It is He Who gives us enough power to do such an action, which includes health, intellect, will and law and order."

"It is He Who looks after our deeds: ***"And say: Work (righteousness): soon will Allah observe your work, and His Apostle and the Believers,"*** *Holy Qur'an (9:105)*

"It is He Who will judge us tomorrow (on the day of Judgement)."

"If we know all these, then we must make all our efforts in order to do good even if it is small and little. It is narrated in a narration *"An action can never be small when there is piety; is it possible for an action to be small while being accepted."*

"It is possible that a word you say is full of seeking Allah's consent, then, you will see it doing a miracle in yourself; changing things completely:"

"One day, Imam Musa bin Ja'far (a.s.) came across one of the house of the city of Baghdad, then, he heard the sound of music and drumming from the house. A woman came out of the house and the Imam (a.s.) asked her: *'Is the master of this house a free man or a slave?'*, she replied to him: 'he is a free man', the Imam said: *'You are right, because if he is a slave (servant) he will have feared his master'*. The

women went to the master of the house, his name was Bishr, and told him what the Imam had said. He came out barefooted running toward the Imam, to seek Allah's forgiveness through the Imam.

"This is the righteous deed stimulated by a single and an effective word. It is great in the sight of Allah, as it is reported from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.): *"For one person to be guided (towards the right path) by you, is better for you than all the things that the sun shines or sets on."*

"Therefore, purifying deeds – as you see – is more difficult than the deed itself. Have not you seen someone who combines a righteous deed with bad ones, like the one who steals from the rich men to feed the poor ones, while thinking that he does good. We have already known that helping the poor is a good deed, on one condition that it should be done purely seeking Allah's pleasure, while stealing itself is an evil. There is no way I can seek Allah's consent and proximity with good deed done through an evil way, because a pure purpose requires a pure way of reaching it. The Almighty Allah told us about those people, saying: ***"Others (there are who) have acknowledged their wrong doings; they have mixed an act that was good and with another that was evil,"*** *Holy Qur'an (9:102)*

The best way of purifying deeds is comparing between what one of us will get of people's kindness and good word which can vanish as quick as possible and the great and endless reward, what is the outcome of this comparison?"

"- The limited thanks people give, which may not exceed words or even if it exceeded that it will not be more than material benefit, but, if Allah thanks our effort and accepts it, we cannot imagine its outcome, both in this world and the hereafter."

"- The aim of people's consent cannot be perceived. They differ in consolidating deeds. Some who may raise its value while others think the opposite. Some look after shortcomings while, others do not see anything but good. But, in the scale of Allah, righteous deeds have their own value that cannot change, that is it is following a fixed law, there is nothing that will be jealous of it or cause it to vanish and so on."

Ahmad: "Indeed, poor people are those who look for a lower price through sacrificing a huge and expensive thing that can never disappeared."

Mother: "It is unfortunate that most of the people are servants of this world and forget the other world."

Leila: "If we understand this, then let us work righteously."

Father: "Of course, our knowledge of a righteous deed encourages us to work."

"Tomorrow, we will close our discussion with another scene concerning the Day of Judgement. The scene will be for those of people who exceed the limits of life in this world, or take it as a place of an enjoyment, nor do any work for the hereafter, so as to be a lesson for us to do a good deed.

Let Us Do Righteous Deeds:

It is Friday evening. Ahmad and Leila's uncle came to the house as a visitor, after asking the condition of the family, Ahmad asked his Uncle to share them in their discussion, saying:

"O Father, what is your view about utilizing the presence of my Uncle in order to complete our discussion on righteous deed?

The father made a sign to him indicating that the time is unsuitable, and that the completion of the discussion will be performed after his uncle leaves. But, Ahmad and Leila's uncle realized this and asked: "Is it a private discussion?"

Mother: "No it is not private, but in the previous nights, the father of Ahmad taught us about righteous deeds, their composition, invalidators and how to purify them in case they were spoiled by something else. He promised us that he will complete the discussion tonight. Do you like to be with us?"

Uncle: "You are welcome, no problem, since we are not among the scholars, thus, we should learn from them at least."

Father: "This is part of your humbleness, but we don't want to disturb you in this lovely visit."

Uncle: "I have come to your house as a visitor for the sake of Allah and His satisfaction, so if the visit combines with a benefit, then the increment of good is good."

Leila: "Then, father let us start with the discussion on what the Day of Judgement is."

Father (laughing): "Just like that? O.K. let us start. This is the situation of those who left the world without doing good, when they faced the reality after death, and their eyes saw what was covered for it was a long time ago. They will cry and shout asking to be brought back to the world again, whether they will be opportune to do good, or not. Almighty Allah, while talking about those people said: ***"He says: O Lord! Send me back (to life) in order that I may work righteousness in the things I neglected. By no means; it is but a word he says,"*** *Holy Qur'an (23:100)*

"This is an example of a great number of people who were blinded from the worst future, so they went on shouting, hoping that Allah may give them another chance to come back to this world in order to do good.... but never."

"This situation is a great lesson for us that are alive in order to use the chance before it runs away from our hands and before our future becomes like the future of those people."

Uncle: "This situation reminds us of another situation similar to this; but this time from the mouth of a group of people, in the saying of

Almighty Allah: ***"Our Lord we have seen and have heard; now then send us back (to the world) we will work righteousness, for we do indeed (now) believe,"*** *Holy Qur'an (32:12)*

Father: "But this is a hearing and seeing that will not be of any benefit. Whoever doesn't benefit from his sight and hearing in this world, then what benefit can his regret and failure be to him when they turn into a witness against him for wasting his time?"

"This hope after death is just a waste of time. It doesn't benefit anyone, maybe I will summarize this thing for you as follows:"

"Life is a great and valuable chance…and a great field of work. It is the first and the last, therefore, do righteous deeds as much as you can… seek Allah's consent in all your work whether it is small or big… there is no chance for you to exchange it after you leave this world. It is said in one narration: *"Today is work without judgement, and tomorrow is judgement without work."*

Ahmad: "The difference between the one who does good and the one who doesn't, is like the difference between the who reads hard throughout the year and at the end he gets his credit and gifts, and the one who wastes all his time playing, and sleeping. It is said: 'At the

time of an examination, a person will be respected or be disrespected.'"

Leila: "We may compare the calling of Qur'an toward righteous deeds like the calling of the school's principal at the beginning of the year. When he calls the students together and tells them two realities that don't need a third one: It is: Whether you work hard and harvest a good result, or you play and waste your time failing at the end you harvest. Then, he tells them: It is a lesson to whoever grabs it."

Uncle: "May God bless you, may God bless... righteous descendents."

Father (jokingly): "Whoever is like his uncle, will not be deprived."

Uncle (laughing): "Rather whoever is like his father will not be deprived."

Father: "I wanted – if you allow me – to conclude this narration that has a great effect on my life, rather it is my slogan that escorts me every time. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) was reported, while talking to the Muslims, to have said: *"Even if the time has come (Day of Judgement) and one of you has a seed in his hand, then, he should sow it."*

Imagine the time when a woman shall forget her suckling baby...and every pregnant woman shall drop her load...and thou shall see people in a drunken mood, yet not drunk, rather it is the

wrath of Allah that is dreadful. But, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) calls us to do a righteous deed, then which deed is it? Sowing a seed that is small, but, maybe your rescue will be from this action. Indeed, it is a call toward doing good at the most difficult time and situation, or as you called it, scoring a goal at the dying minute of a football game. Who knows it and does a righteous deed, Almighty Allah will look at him with His eye of mercy and kindness; he will erase his place among the people of Hell and make him to be among the people of Paradise."

Leila (jokingly): "O father, can our work and our discussion on righteous deeds be regarded as a righteous deed?"

Father: "And what is your opinion?"

Leila: "I see it like this."

Ahmad: "But, it must be stimulated by a righteous act before it will be a righteous act."

Father: "Our intention of doing it is solely for Allah and it is a reminder for us and for you."

Uncle: "May Allah reward us with some reward of your work."

Mother: "Let us raise our hands in prayer with the intention of acceptance: ***"Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us; for thou art the all hearing, the all knowing,"*** *Holy Qur'an (2:127)*

All in one sound: "Amen."

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.